

CAL POLY Agriview

FALL 2007

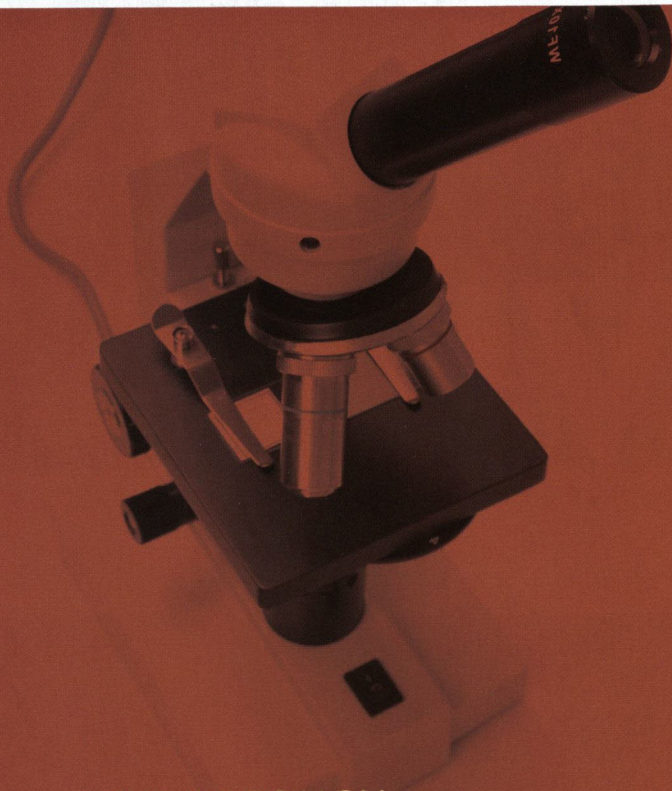
NEWSLETTER VOLUME 10 ISSUE 1

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

POISED FOR
GREATNESS

PAGE 6





Agriview

STAY IN TOUCH

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Message From The Dean	3
News Briefs.....	4
Poised For Greatness	6
Clicking On All Cylinders	8
Apple Of His Eye	9
Sorting Out Success	10
Toone Memorial Fund Benefits Dairy Science	11
Your IRA Can Support Cal Poly	12

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the SPIRIT of AGRICULTURE

BY DEAN DAVID WEHNER



Earlier this year, when the California Agriculture Leadership Program asked Professor and CALP Campus Coordinator Bob Flores and me to accompany Class 36 on their trip to Western Africa, I immediately said yes. Some of you may already be familiar with CALP and its goals of not only ensuring a supply of future leaders for the industry, but also developing individuals who want to make a difference in their local communities.

Seven of the 22 members of Class 36 were Cal Poly graduates, a tribute to the quality of our alumni. Typically, the international trip goes to at least one developing country, and this year the trip involved a visit to Ghana and Mali.

Rather than trying to share the sights, sounds, smells and experiences of traveling across Africa in a bus, airplane and four-wheel-drive vehicle, I'd like to share some of my observations. The most important revelation for me was that the trip was defined less by the countries we visited than by the people with whom I was traveling.

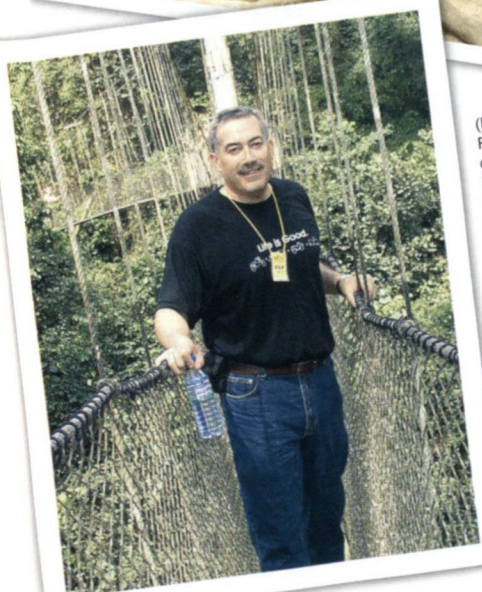
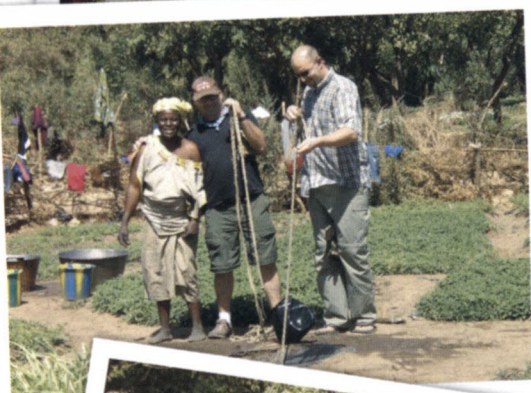
Seeing members of the class lying on the ground helping the bus driver change a flat tire in the middle of Mali reminded me of the spirit and work ethic of those involved in agriculture. I also observed countless children who were enthralled by one of the participants when she showed them how her digital camera worked and the hero status of another class member who demonstrated genius by bringing soccer balls to give to the children.



The care and ingenuity of those in agriculture were reinforced. The acceptance of my presence by the class, in spite of the fact that I had not been with them for the first year and a half of the program, was appreciated. Seeing the group work together through the challenges of a missed flight from Ghana to Dubai, and spending an entire day in the airline ticket office hoping to be rebooked, demonstrated their interpersonal support.

Now, fast-forward to a meeting in July where the Governor of Wyoming spoke to agriculture administrators. He stated that agriculture in Wyoming was not a major portion of the state's economic output, but that it was a huge contributor to defining the fabric of the state, its values, ethics and morals. His words reminded me of my own observations on the trip in Africa.

It is a tremendous privilege to interact with and help educate students in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. I hope that all of you have the opportunity to experience and appreciate the qualities that make agriculture a special contributor to our state and nation.



(Left) Professor Robert Flores, head of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department, received recognition as one of the Most Influential Latinos on the Central Coast at an awards ceremony in March. Flores was among 25 people to be honored.

Above Photos: Dave Wehner

NEWS BRIEF



A GIFT OF TREES

This year, Cal Poly received an impressive Arbor Day gift.

ValleyCrest Companies marked the tree-honoring holiday at the university by donating three mature Swan Hill fruitless olive trees to the Environmental Horticulture Science Unit. Large knuckle-boom cranes were used to place the 15-foot trees into holes that students had dug, giving members of an EHS construction class some hands-on training in exactly what goes into planting large-specimen trees.

David Hanson, senior vice president of ValleyCrest Landscape Maintenance, said he hopes the olive trees will stand as mementos for the students to show their families in the future.

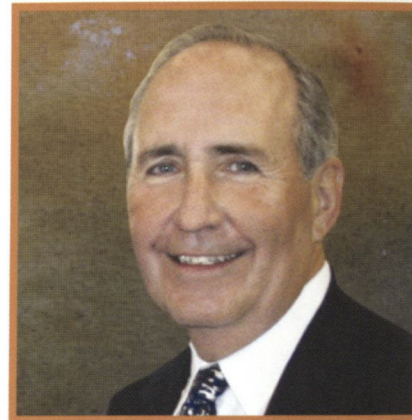
ValleyCrest currently employs 35 Cal Poly graduates in management positions, with an additional eight Cal Poly students serving as interns.



AGRIBUSINESS STUDENT ELECTED ASI PRESIDENT

Agribusiness senior Brandon Souza joined the ranks of many agriculture students before him when he was elected Cal Poly's ASI President in May 2007. He followed the likes of successful lawyer **George Soares (AGB '66)** and prominent local businesswoman **Erica Stewart (HE '97)**, to become the 21st CAFES student elected as president in the past 70 years.

Since his freshman year, Souza has been actively involved in Cal Poly's agriculture and ASI arenas, leading to his election to the university's most prestigious student government position. Further down the road, Souza would like to use his policy-concentration agribusiness degree and the experience he's gained from student government to run for public office.



GEORGE GOMES NAMED STATE AG UNDERSECRETARY

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has appointed Cal Poly alumnus **George Gomes (AGB '66)** as undersecretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Gomes worked at the California Farm Bureau as its administrator since 1987. He previously served as the CDFA chief deputy director and as assistant director overseeing the Division of Fairs and Expos.

Gomes holds a bachelor's degree in agribusiness management and was the college's Outstanding Graduate in 1966. He earned a master's degree in agriculture education in 1967 and worked at Cal Poly as an associate professor of agricultural management. In 1983, he was named the college's Alumnus of the Year.

"I have benefited firsthand from George's legendary devotion to agricultural education. He was one of my professors at Cal Poly," California Farm Bureau President Doug Mosebar said. "His new position at CDFA will give him a new and unique opportunity to shape the future of California agriculture."

F S



FRESH ON THE FARM

In her new role as manager of Cal Poly's organic farm, **Cindy Douglas (ASCI '91)** says she plans to expand the farm's outreach efforts, emphasizing the "growing gardens" program that teaches school kids in grades K-6 about organic agriculture.

It's a return trip for Douglas. Her last stint at Cal Poly was earning a master's degree in agriculture in 1994. After working for the past 12 years in the organics industry, she came back to campus in February to manage the 11-acre organic farm.

Along with outreach, her responsibilities include managing farm production and keeping the fields ready for student projects and research. Douglas believes it's important for Cal Poly agriculture students to view the organic farm as a valuable part of their education and says she would like to see more students take advantage of the opportunities the farm offers.

The organic farm is closely aligned with the college's Sustainable Agriculture Resource Consortium. Pictured with Douglas (above) is Professor Neal McDougall, SARC's faculty director.



FLOWER POWER

The Cal Poly flower judging team caught some premature April showers, but avoided tornadoes, on the way to besting their competition at the Flower Judging National Championship last March in Stillwater, Okla.

This year's championship team added one more to a string of Cal Poly flower-judging successes, which includes five national championships in the past six years.

Team members were Hilary Hirzel, Ryan Bolduan and Amy Lomeli, with Elaine Barodte serving as an alternate. Hirzel placed first in the country for individual overall judging and also topped the individual cut flowers competition. Bolduan followed with a second-place individual finish in cut flowers.

The team was coached by horticulture and crop science Professor Virginia Walter, who was assisted by Jamie Mastright.



FOOD SAFETY SYMPOSIUM

The Brock Center for Agricultural Communication and the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences hosted a food safety forum last spring on the agriculture industry's response to food safety concerns, especially in the wake of last year's *e. coli* outbreak in spinach.

Vegetable industry leaders who shared their perspectives with Cal Poly students and faculty were grower Joe Pezzini, operations vice president, Ocean Mist Farms; packer and shipper Richard Quandt, president, Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association; distributor Tim York, president, Markon Cooperative; and retail owner Steve Junqueiro, operations vice president, Savemart.

Agribusiness and agricultural education and communication students organized the forum under the guidance of Professor Richard Gearhart (above), director of the Brock Center.

The mission of the Brock Center is to create a bridge of communication between the agriculture industry, media and the public. For more information on the Brock Center, go to www.calpoly.edu/~brockctrl.



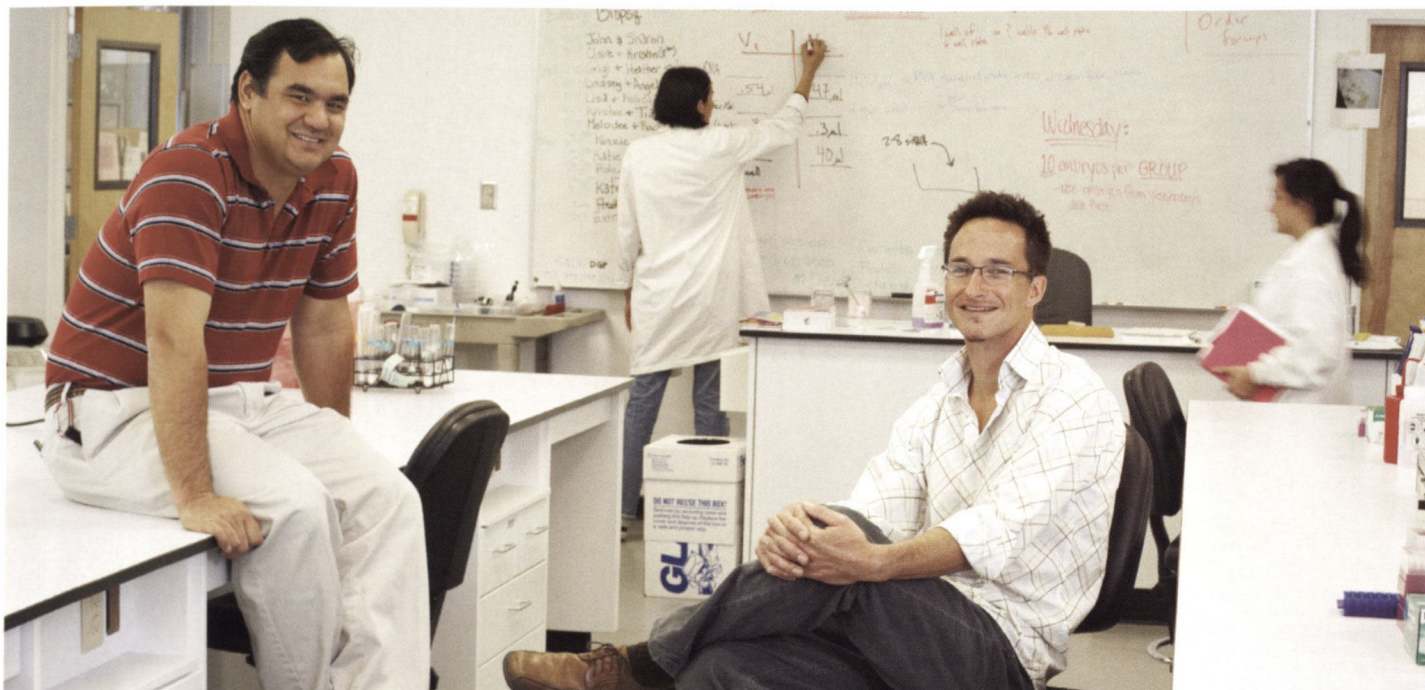
Photo: iStockPhoto

POISED FOR GREATNESS

BY DAVID WILCOX

In a 500-square-foot room, filled with maybe \$250,000 worth of scientific equipment, 12 students vie for space to conduct research under the guidance of animal science Professor Dan Peterson, a specialist in applied biotechnology.

Cramped quarters and classrooms substituting as research labs have made construction of a cutting-edge Agricultural Technology Center the top priority of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.



Crop science Professor Jeff Wong (left) and animal science Professor Dan Peterson in the teaching lab

The college has embarked upon a campaign to raise \$20 million to erect the high-tech center that will foster advances in real-world, applied research, help facilitate senior projects, and build upon the university's reputation for preparing future agriculture industry leaders through its learn-by-doing philosophy.

"What better sort of learning environment is there than an actual research lab," remarked Peterson in assessing the need for the new center. "It would be hugely valuable."

Dean David Wehner said the drive to raise money for the center represents a turning point for the college. Construction of new lab facilities is critical, he said, to adequately educate students to meet the challenges currently facing the agriculture industry.

"Our current field facilities give students real world experience in agricultural and forestry production practices," Wehner said. "As the technology associated with agriculture, food and environmental sciences has intensified, we have not been able to provide the exposure to advanced technologies. We need laboratory facilities that complement our field facilities. Agriculturalists have to be concerned with not only producing a commodity, but how that commodity is processed and marketed. We must also be able to address environmental issues, as well."

The 35,000-square-foot, multi-story center will feature five large labs and 11 smaller "flex" labs. A state-of-the-art conference center, equipped with modern communication tools, and a number of student presentation labs are also planned.

These kinds of enhanced research facilities, according to the National Science Foundation, "enable the integration of research and education and the cross-disciplinary pursuits that are hallmarks of contemporary practice in research and education." They also help "attract and keep first-rate faculty." And, faculty retention is an important concern at Cal Poly.

"In order to continue our heritage of learn-by-doing," said Wehner, "we will also have to bring in new faculty as our older faculty members retire."

Graduate and undergraduate students involved in thesis research and senior projects are also impacted by the limited facilities. "The space that they have to use is shared with classroom lab activities," said Peterson. "It really puts the research at risk for mistakes."

Crop science Professor Wyatt Brown says the proposed high-tech center will allow students and faculty to work on projects with real-world implications. "There is a lot of research on an applied basis that is falling through the cracks," Brown said. "I think we can do some really useful work for the state and the nation."

Construction of the ATC is expected to attract both private research grants and additional funding from California's Agriculture Research Initiative. CAFES has so far received more than \$5.3 million for innovative research. While the initiative funds research, it doesn't provide money for additional lab space.

Brown said his department is poised for greatness. "These facilities will enable our faculty and students to accomplish the kinds of things I know they can do."





CLICKING ON ALL CYLINDERS

BY DAVID WILCOX

On a miserable, rainy Sunday in November a couple of years ago, **Bob Meyer (AGB '54)** made the 60-mile trek from London to Brighton. He couldn't remember ever feeling so cold and damp.

It was great.

"I had more fun than I ever had in one day," said Meyer, one of a handful of Americans participating that day in the famed annual London to Brighton Veteran Car Run.

Meyer, owner of Meyer Tomatoes, is a vintage automobile enthusiast whose passion for the hobby perhaps reached a pinnacle at the London to Brighton run.

"It's really a spectacle."

About 500 autos – none built after 1904 – began the run and made the drive at speeds (if that's the right word) topping out at about 14 mph. Some were barely more than buggies. Meyer piloted a two-cylinder, nine-horsepower, 1904 Mitchell that he shipped to England for the event.

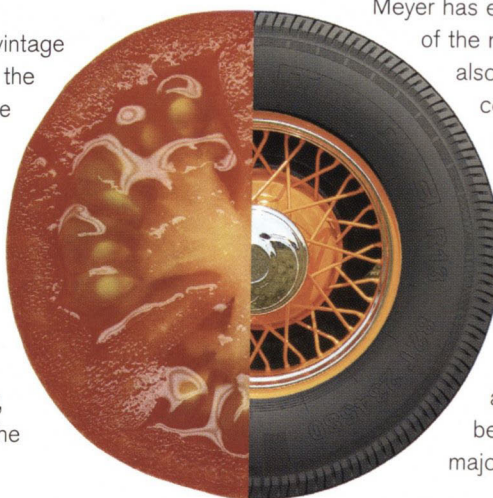
While the London to Brighton run is strictly for amusement, Meyer for several years enjoyed enormous success at competitive vintage car shows. He consistently earned blue ribbons in events around the nation and in Europe, including a best-in-show prize at the 1989 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance with his one-of-a-kind, 1922 Hispano-Suiza automobile.

Meyer's passion for cars was stoked early in life. He recalls first driving tractors and trucks on his father's tomato farm as a 12-year-

old during World War II. He tinkered on the farm's vehicles, taking them apart and reassembling them.

It wasn't until several years later, though, after his father gave him a 1931 Packard as a birthday present in 1960, that he started restoring vintage autos and entering car shows.

"I just thought it would be fun."



Meyer has enjoyed equal success in business, leading one of the nation's largest suppliers of fresh tomatoes. He also owns Meyer Trucking, which ships a number of commodities besides tomatoes, including wine grapes.

His legacy at Cal Poly – which includes the Earhart Building's Robert Meyer Conference Room – now extends three generations. His son graduated from the university; one grandson recently graduated from the college with a recreation, parks and tourism administration degree; and another is just beginning his collegiate career as an agribusiness major.

Meyer said he hopes his granddaughter, now in high school, also winds up at Cal Poly.

What sets Cal Poly apart, he said, is that agriculture students learn about the industry and are prepared for the practical, business aspects of an ag career.

As for his own career, he doesn't see it winding down anytime soon. "I'll probably never retire. I'm having too much fun."



APPLE OF HIS EYE

BY DAVID WILCOX

Weekends and summers working on his family's coastal ranch north of Santa Cruz inspired a love for agriculture in Peter Oppenheimer that remains to this day.

Those early experiences led **Oppenheimer (AGB '85)** to Cal Poly. He is now senior vice president and chief financial officer at Apple Computer.

"I do have a lifelong love and passion for agriculture," said Oppenheimer, "to which I do plan to return some day, in some way."

It is Oppenheimer's fondness for agriculture and his appreciation for the educational roots planted at Cal Poly that, in part, inspired his \$200,000 donation for the construction on campus of a state-of-the-art Meat Processing Center.

"I wanted to do something to help future students."

Oppenheimer's generosity extends to his time, as well. He serves on the Cal Poly Foundation Board of Directors, where he sits on the investment and audit committees.

"I think we've got the foundation off to a good start," he said.

It was through the foundation's board that he met Andy Thulin, head of Cal Poly's Animal Science Department, who first spoke to Oppenheimer about the proposed Meat Processing Center. Thulin said he found that Cal Poly's innovative, applied research approach to education appealed to Oppenheimer. "Peter's interest in technology and innovation dovetailed with his interest in agriculture."

As an agribusiness major at Cal Poly, Oppenheimer completed a number of finance and accounting courses, and he learned about the financial world through internships with Wells Fargo in the bank's agriculture lending program.

Oppenheimer returned to school and earned a master's degree in business administration from the University of Santa Clara before launching a management consulting career. He was initially hired at Apple in 1996, and in 2004 was named CFO.

"I had a wonderful experience at Cal Poly," reflected Oppenheimer. "All the things that I learned at Cal Poly and during my internships set me on a good foundation for my postgraduate degree."



Peter Oppenheimer with his son, Mark.

SORTING OUT SUCCESS

BY PAT BROERING



Professor Lauren Garner

When Lauren Garner came to the Horticulture and Crop Science Department in fall 2005, she was impressed by the extensive citrus and avocado orchards, the success of the enterprise project, and her students' enthusiasm.

What the fruit science professor found lacking was up-to-date grading equipment that could handle a variety of fruits and ensure food safety and storage longevity. Then she met David Krause, president of Paramount Citrus and a member of the HCS Department advisory council.

Garner expressed her concerns to Krause, and he listened. As a result, Paramount and Aweta-Autoline Inc. donated the state-of-the-art grader/sorter recently installed in a newly renovated fruit lab.

With the help of **Tim Hutcheson (BRAE '82)**, Paramount's director of plant engineering and facilities development, and Cal Poly's Facilities Services and Facilities Planning departments, students will now be trained on a world-class, fully computerized system for grading, sizing and sorting citrus, avocados, kiwis and a host of other fruits.

And that bodes well for the future, according to HCS Department Head John C. Peterson. "This industry support enables us to continue to provide a contemporary, incomparable educational experience for our students," he said. "They can graduate with the knowledge and training to find great success and assume key leadership positions within the industry."

Paramount Citrus is owned by Stewart and Linda Resnick, whose other companies include Paramount Farms, Fiji Water, the Pom Wonderful line of pomegranate-based products, and Suterra, manufacturers and marketers of pheromone-based pest-control products. In 2000, Paramount bought the fresh citrus operations of the Dole Food Company, becoming the largest fully integrated citrus grower, packer, shipper and marketer in North America.

MEET JOHN PETERSON

John C. Peterson started his new job as the Horticulture and Crop Science Department head last April. As the new leader of the department, Peterson brings a bounty of experience in funding and "growing" botanical gardens and horticultural preserves.

He came to the university from the San Francisco Botanical Garden, where he was the director. Prior to that, he served as the president and CEO of the Turtle Bay Exploration Park, a botanical garden and arboretum along the Sacramento River. He also led the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for more than a decade. And, he taught for many years at Ohio State University at Columbus.

"Professor Peterson's experience will certainly be an asset to the college," said Dean David Wehner. "Our students will benefit from his experience in the commercial world, as well as his background in horticulture research."





Department Head Bruce Golden (left), alumnus Doug Maddox (center) and Department Head Emeritus Gene Starkey in the Cal Poly Dairy milking parlor.

TOONE MEMORIAL FUND BENEFITS DAIRY SCIENCE

BY KATIE HOFSTETTER

Fifty years ago, Harmon Toone began a 20-year reign as department head of Cal Poly Dairy Science. Fifty years ago, Holstein Association USA President Doug Maddox earned a Cal Poly dairy science degree.

Today, Maddox is working to honor his former advisor by finalizing The Harmon Toone Memorial Fund, a goal that includes building the fund to \$1 million by November. Fortunately, Maddox, chairman of the Harmon Toone Memorial Committee, has former Dairy Science Department Head Gene Starkey and new Dairy Science Department Head Bruce Golden working alongside him.

Doubling the \$500,000-strong Toone Endowment was one of Golden's first orders of business since coming to Cal Poly in June. After a 19-year professorship at Colorado State University, prior to running his own business for 4½ years, Golden has found "it's really obvious 'learn by doing' is taken very seriously at Cal Poly."

With the state's largest university dairy now at his fingertips, Golden hopes Cal Poly's dairy science program can serve as a model in environmental stewardship and product innovation, especially when it comes to expanding the cheese and ice cream offerings.

"It's important to be responsive to industry needs when training students," Golden said.

Using the Toone Endowment payout, he plans to maintain the caliber of hands-on learning by continually modernizing the department's infrastructure.

Since its creation in 2000, Toone Endowment money has already been used to rebuild the dairy's free stalls, remodel the milk barn to include radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags, and fund advanced reproduction technologies.

"I think Harmon Toone would be really proud of the fact that what we're doing enhances the herd that was his pride and joy," Maddox said. "In the years that he was at Cal Poly, he built the herd into national prominence, and he would be pleased that we're continuing the quality today."

Aiming to finalize the Toone Endowment by Homecoming 2007, Maddox, Starkey and Golden are planning a celebration on Saturday, Nov. 10, to include industry, donors and alumni, and to give special recognition to Maddox and his fellow 1957 dairy science graduates.

YOUR IRA CAN SUPPORT CAL POLY

Harold Page Jr. (ASCI '56) wanted to make a large gift to Cal Poly for quite some time. Then he received information from Cal Poly's Planned Giving and Endowments Office about making a charitable gift through his Individual Retirement Account (IRA).

He was able to do this under the Pension Protection Act of 2006. For the remainder of 2007, this legislation gives those at least 70.5 years of age the opportunity to make tax-free gifts to a qualified charity from traditional or Roth IRA funds.

Page helped support the construction of the new Animal Nutrition Center through his gift.

For more information on this program and other ways to give to Cal Poly, contact the Planned Giving and Endowments Office toll-free at (800) 549-2666, at plannedgiving@calpoly.edu, or www.plannedgiving.calpoly.edu.



Animal science majors in the Animal Nutrition Center

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